

Amendment 309 – Prohibits spending stimulus funding to pay for casinos, museums, aquariums, zoos, golf courses, swimming pools, stadiums, parks, theaters, art centers, or highway beautification projects.

The stimulus bill includes billions of dollars for various grant programs for state and local governments for local “shovel ready” projects.

To ensure that tax dollars are not misdirected to pay for projects that do not create permanent jobs for laid off, skilled workers, Section 1109 of the stimulus bill passed by the House of Representatives stated “none of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this Act may be used for any casino or other gambling establishment, aquarium, zoo, golf course, or swimming pool.”

The Senate bill dropped this taxpayer protection and local politicians have already announced their plans to spend stimulus funds on questionable projects.

This amendment would apply the House-passed spending prohibition language to the Senate stimulus bill and add other projects, such as highway beautification and museums, to the list of initiatives that could not be paid for with stimulus funds.

While creating new parks, swimming pools, casinos and golf courses may result in some new temporary jobs, it will not produce the types of permanent jobs that the skilled American workers who have been laid off are hoping will result from the passage of the stimulus bill.

Mayors Stimulus Spending “Wish List” Contains Spending Billions of Dollars in Wasteful and Questionable Projects

The U.S. Conference of Mayors’ wish-list of “shovel-ready” spending projects, entitled “Mainstreet Recovery Ready to Go Infrastructure Report”, includes billions of questionable or wasteful projects that should not be funded by taxpayers.

Intended as a menu of options for the new federal stimulus package,

the mayors' wish-list is loaded with more than 31,000 earmarks totaling \$73.2 billion, four times the total amount of federal pork contained in the appropriations bills for the entire fiscal year 2008.¹

Some examples of “shovel ready” projects that mayors are hoping to pay for with stimulus funds include:

- \$1.1 billion for 41 projects to improve Amtrak infrastructure;
- \$192.6 million for 12 projects directed to stadiums, including \$150 million for the Metromover Extension to Marlins Stadium in Miami, Florida. In 2008, the Florida Marlins had the worst attendance in Major League Baseball, playing in front of an average crowd of 16,668 fans, or 45.9 percent of their stadium's capacity;
- \$87 million for 56 projects for bicycle paths;
- \$6 million for a reclamation/improvement project at Surfers Point beach in Ventura, California;
- \$1.5 million for an initiative to reduce prostitution in Dayton, Ohio;
- \$700,000 to plant 1,600 trees along the sidewalks in Providence, Rhode Island;
- \$500,000 for environmentally-friendly golf courses in Dayton, Ohio;
- \$8.4 million for a Polar Bear Exhibit at the Roger William Park Zoo in Providence, Rhode Island;
- \$6.1 million for corporate jet hangars in Fayetteville, Arkansas
- \$100,000 to create one cop job in Sulfur Creek, California;

¹ Citizens Against Government Waste, <http://www.cagw.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=11762>

- \$100,000 to rehabilitate a skate board park in Alameda, California;
- \$500,000 for Sunset View Dog Park in Chula Vista, California; and
- \$8 million for developing an equestrian park in San Juan, Puerto Rico.²

Las Vegas Mayor Plans to Spend Stimulus Funds to Build a \$50 Million Mob Museum

Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman, a former criminal defense lawyer who represented several Mafia figures in the 1970s and 1980s, plans to spend stimulus funding to build a \$50 museum dedicated to the history of organized crime, known as the “mob museum.”

The mayor claims the museum is “absolutely falling within the four corners of what President Obama is trying to achieve.”³

The mayor also says that it is appropriate because the city owes much of its success to the “made” men and associates of organized crime. “If we didn't have the mob in our background, we'd be like El Paso with gambling,” he says.⁴

“This is a project where all the plans are in place and we can start it within 30 days,” said Mayor Goodman.⁵

Poll Finds Few Local Las Vegas Residents Support the Mob Museum

² <http://www.cagw.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=11762>

³ Steve Friess. “Stimulus Money for a Mob Museum. Got a Problem?” The New York Times, January 9, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/10/us/10mob.html> .

⁴ William M. Welch. “Vegas museum to link crime and law,” USA Today, December 16, 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/2008-12-15-mobmuseum_N.htm .

⁵ Steve Friess. “Stimulus Money for a Mob Museum. Got a Problem?” The New York Times, January 9, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/10/us/10mob.html> .

According to the *Las Vegas Sun*, Mayor Goodman's proposal to create a mob museum "caused a minor uproar" among local residents. "Community activists railed against the possible glorification of organized crime. Some Italian-Americans expressed anger over how they might be portrayed."⁶

A poll conducted by the city in 2006 showed that although tourists were interested in a museum dedicated to the Mafia's local exploits, Las Vegas residents were far less interested.⁷

Pollsters surveyed 600 locals and 300 tourists in Las Vegas to gauge their interest in a handful of possible themes for a museum in downtown Las Vegas. The options included a "behind-the-scenes" look at gambling, a magic museum, a "vintage Vegas" theme, a museum dedicated to Las Vegas icons such as Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra, and the mob museum.

While most visitors expressed interest in the mob museum, only **17 percent** of local residents picked the mob museum as their choice for a new tourist attraction.

Jason Gray, director of research and development for Strategic Surveys, which conducted the study, said "people living here are more uncomfortable revealing aspects of our criminal history than not."⁸

Mob Museum Is Already Receiving Federal Funding and Support

Set to open next year, the \$50 million museum project has seen only \$15 million raised since 2001, including about \$3.6 million in federal grants.⁹

⁶ Sam Skolnik. "Oh, the irony: The former mob lawyer gets FBI support for mob museum," *Las Vegas Sun*, August 17, 2008, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/aug/17/oh-irony-former-mob-lawyer-gets-fbi-support-mob-mu/>.

⁷ Sam Skolnik. "Oh, the irony: The former mob lawyer gets FBI support for mob museum," *Las Vegas Sun*, August 17, 2008, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/aug/17/oh-irony-former-mob-lawyer-gets-fbi-support-mob-mu/>.

⁸ "Las Vegas locals, tourists split on mob museum idea," Associated Press, April 17, 2006, http://www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/2006-04-17-vegas-mob-museum_x.htm.

⁹ "Museum is work of art for mayor," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, January 11, 2009, <http://www.lvrj.com/news/37406609.html>.

City officials pitched the idea to FBI officials in Washington, who have committed to helping fill the museum with exhibits.¹⁰

FBI officials are “actively participating to ensure the museum fully and accurately illustrates the exploits of mob-busting G-men.”¹¹

The city also acquired the post office which will be transformed into the mob museum from the federal government in May 2002.¹²

Las Vegas Already Has Mob Tourist Attractions

Six nights a week, tourists can purchase tickets for a narrated bus ride called the Las Vegas Mob Tour. Visitors hear stories and see the house where much of *Casino* was filmed, a church built with mob money, the restaurant where Rosenthal's car was bombed.

Bobby Baltus, one of the Mob Tour guides, says “let's face it, these guys built this town. If it wasn't for them, there probably wouldn't be a Las Vegas.” And, he says, “where else in America could a mobster's lawyer become the town's mayor?”¹³

Senate Majority Leader Says Spending Stimulus Money on a Mob Museum Would Be an Earmark

President Obama asked Congress to pass an economic stimulus bill free of Congressional pet projects. Senate leaders claim there are no earmarks in the stimulus bill.

¹⁰ Sam Skolnik. “Oh, the irony: The former mob lawyer gets FBI support for mob museum ,” Las Vegas Sun, August 17, 2008, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/aug/17/oh-irony-former-mob-lawyer-gets-fbi-support-mob-mu/> .

¹¹ Sam Skolnik. “Oh, the irony: The former mob lawyer gets FBI support for mob museum ,” Las Vegas Sun, August 17, 2008, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/aug/17/oh-irony-former-mob-lawyer-gets-fbi-support-mob-mu/> .

¹² Sam Skolnik. “Oh, the irony: The former mob lawyer gets FBI support for mob museum ,” Las Vegas Sun, August 17, 2008, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/aug/17/oh-irony-former-mob-lawyer-gets-fbi-support-mob-mu/> .

¹³ William M. Welch. “Vegas museum to link crime and law,” USA Today, December 16, 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/2008-12-15-mobmuseum_N.htm .

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid who has defended the proposed mob museum in his home state, said contrary to the Las Vegas mayor 's wishes, it wouldn't be paid for in the upcoming economic stimulus plan.

"I think that the mob museum is a good idea. I think it will draw a lot of people," Reid said. But "the economic stimulus plan will have no earmarks in it, there will be none."

"I think most everybody would" consider money for the museum an earmark, Reid said.¹⁴

Federal Funds Are Currently Available for Museums and Libraries

The U.S. Conference of Mayors' stimulus "Wish List" includes \$718.5 million for 54 projects directed to museums, which equals \$13.3 million per museum.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) was established within the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities by the Museum and Library Services Act of 1996. The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. In FY 2008, the IMLS budget was \$268 million.

Many museums receiving federal funds have millions of dollars in net assets, some in excess of \$100 million.

Yet, included in this mayors' report that signals how the mayor's plan on spending the stimulus money, it includes \$718.5 million to museums such as these:

- \$20 million to build a Minor League Baseball Museum in Durham, North Carolina;

¹⁴ "Reid Supports Mob Museum, but Not in Stimulus Bill," January 14, 2009, Associated Press, <http://www.lasvegasnow.com/global/story.asp?s=9676555> .

- \$1.75 million for the Music Museum of Ponce, Puerto Rico;
- \$35 million for the Music Hall of Fame in Florissant, Missouri;
- \$4.2 million for 18th and Vine Museum facility improvement in Kansas City, Missouri;
- \$10 million for improvements to Thomas Edison Museum in Edison, New Jersey;
- \$55 million for the Las Vegas Historic Post Office Museum in Las Vegas, Nevada; and
- \$500,000 to rehab of old train station to develop the local museum of transportation in Hormigueros, Puerto Rico

The Golf Course Industry is a Multi-Billion Dollar Enterprise and Does Not Need Stimulus Funds

The golf course industry in the United States boasts approximately 12,000 golf courses that generate combined annual revenues of about \$18 billion. The average commercial course has annual revenue of about \$1 million.¹⁵

This already thriving industry will see a substantial increase in demand with the baby boomer generation retirement. According to a recent study by the National Golf Foundation, about nine million boomers are golfers and they are about to move into the higher play frequency and golf spending years.¹⁶

The Foundation also estimates that over the next 20 years, total rounds attributable to boomers will increase by 75 million to 100 million above what they are currently playing. The Foundation concludes that “the bottom line is that over the next 20 years there

¹⁵ http://www.hoovers.com/golf-courses/--ID__93--/free-ind-fr-profile-basic.xhtml

¹⁶ <http://www.worldgolf.com/newswire/browse/6637-NGF-newsletter-looks-at-future-impact-of-baby-boomers-on-golf>

will be more golfers in the higher play frequency years than at any time in history.”¹⁷

Government subsidies for golf courses are not necessary, although cities across the country have announced that they will spend stimulus funds for golf course projects, including:

- \$5 million for golf course renovations in Shreveport, Louisiana;
- \$1.2 million for golf and park restoration in Brockton, Massachusetts;
- \$1.5 million to replace golf clubhouse in Roseville, Minnesota;
- \$1.1 million to construct a new golf course in Florissant, Missouri;
- \$2.1 million Forest Park urban golf renovation in St. Louis, Missouri;
- \$3 million for golf club house replacement in Lincoln, Nebraska;
- \$500,000 for environmentally friendly golf course in Dayton, Ohio; and
- \$3 million for renovation of golf course maintenance building, Kauai County, Hawaii.

¹⁷ <http://www.worldgolf.com/newswire/browse/6637-NGF-newsletter-looks-at-future-impact-of-baby-boomers-on-golf>